Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

News release

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Family Law in BC website gets funding for continued enhancements

Vancouver, BC – Already BC's premier source of family law information, the Legal Services Society's Family Law in BC website is about to get even better.

During the launch of the site's latest improvements in Vancouver on Wednesday, November 29, the Law Foundation of BC announced it will provide LSS with additional funding for continued enhancements.

"This is great news," says LSS Executive Director Mark Benton. "It means LSS can build on the substantial improvements we've just implemented."

The site was developed over the past five years with special project funding from the Law Foundation. The foundation's announcement will provide the society with a further $483,600 over the next 3 years.

Carol McEown, LSS Manager of Public Information and Community Liaison, says the new funding will help the society make the site more relevant to diverse communities and to younger audiences who have adopted the web as a means of communication.

"This site is already very popular," says McEown. "On average, it gets more than 100,000 visits a year — about half of these are from the Lower Mainland, while the other half are from Victoria (15%), smaller BC communities (30%), or outside the province (5%)."

Benton describes the site as part of the society's emphasis on providing innovative services to support early intervention and early resolutions for clients.

"It's one of the ways we've used technology to help people who, once they get the right information, are able to handle their legal problems on their own or with the assistance of others such as family duty counsel or community advocates," says Benton.

McEown adds that "we know we are really making a difference when we get comments like: Your website is amazing and has calmed my nerves enough to go forward with my request for raising my child support payments on my own … thanks."

LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family, child protection, and criminal issues. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available at most courts through duty counsel and by telephone through LawLINE and the Brydges Line (both are province-wide toll-free lines).

Legal information is available through Legal Information Outreach Worker (LIOW) services, LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, Family Law in BC, LSS, and LawLINK websites. (See www.lss.bc.ca for most of our publications, our catalogue, and website links.)

*To contact the **LSS Call Centre** and **LawLINE**, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).*

The most recent improvements make it easier for people to find and use the legal information they need, says McEown.

All the content from the original site is still there, but much has been reorganized and new material has been added.

As well, LSS is expanding the site's video clips. Those currently on the site are viewed more than 1,700 times per month, suggesting video can reach a great many people. McEown says the society is testing this premise "by developing new web clips for English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and Aboriginal audiences."

The clips use dramatizations of the types of situations clients face and what they can do to resolve their legal problems. Two of the series are completed and others will be posted as they become available.

"We hope the use of video clips will make the site more accessible to people with lower English literacy skills," says McEown.

New sections now available on the redesigned website include fact sheets on a variety of family law topics, frequently asked questions based on topics people have asked about, and direct links to court forms. Other improvements include providing pop-up definitions of legal terms used throughout the site and giving visitors the ability to change font sizes.

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